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SUBJECT: UGANDA: THE CONTINUED DECLINE AND FALL OF THE LRA

Classified By: Political Officer Tim Manarin for reasons
1.4.(b) and (d).

1.(C) Summary: The November 3 surrender of the Lord's Resistance Army's (LRA) commander for eastern forces, LTC Charles Arop, signals a major defeat for LRA remnants located in northeastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and provides another indicator of the LRA's rapid unraveling. On October 20, ex-LRA spokesman David Matsanga said Joseph Kony is seeking renewed peace negotiations due to growing military pressure. Although Matsanga's credibility is low, his renewed interest in trading on Kony's reputation while there is still time suggests he too believes the LRA's end is near.

On October 26, a U.S. NGO focused on the LRA praised the professionalism of the Ugandan Peoples Defense Forces (UPDF) operating in southern Sudan and said Kony might commit a Jim Jones style mass suicide with his entourage if cornered. Meanwhile, Ugandan authorities are preparing to prosecute selected senior LRA officers with war crimes. End Summary.

LRA's Eastern Wing Collapsing

12. (S/NF) The head of the LRA in northeastern DRC, LTC Charles Arop, surrendered to the UPDF on November 3 in the DRC. With an initial force of at least 200 rebels, Arop was the LRA's top commander for areas east of Garamba National Park in DRC. Arop's LRA group was responsible for the 25-26 December 2008 "Christmas Massacre" where more than 280 Congolese were brutally killed and others were raped and abducted. Arop's group continued to operate with relative impunity until the DRC and Uganda agreed in March 2009 to conduct joint operations south of the Dungu-Faradje road. With information assistance from Africa Command, the UPDF severely depleted Arop's capabilities. According to UPDF Chief of Military Intelligence Brig. Gen. Mugira, Arop will be taken to the UPDF 4th Division HQ in Nzara, Southern Sudan. He will be questioned and instructed to communicate with his remaining Brigade Commander in the east, LTC Okot Odek, and with other LRA forces in DRC to encourage them to surrender.

13. (C) Arop's surrender is the latest major setback for the LRA. The UPDF killed Kony's personal signaler, Major Michael Epado, on October 16 in the Central African Republic (CAR). Since launching its regional offensive in December 2008, the UPDF claims to have killed 253 LRA fighters, captured 101, and liberated 357 abductees. We believe the LRA still has 300-350 fighters remaining, with the majority concentrated in the Sudan-DRC-CAR border area. Arop's surrender will enable the UPDF to re-focus its efforts nearly entirely on Kony and his remaining fighters in CAR.

EX-LRA Spokesman Claims Message from Kony

14. (C) The former LRA envoy David Matsanga told Poloff on October 20 that Kony is willing to restart peace talks with the Ugandan government. Matsanga was the LRA's external spokesman from 1998 to 2002 and later became the group's lead negotiator for the January 2008 Juba Peace Talks. He resigned in August 2009 citing Kony's repeated failure to sign a final peace agreement. Matsanga said he last spoke to Kony in late September, and said UPDF operations have turned Kony's civilian entourage into a serious burden and that Kony is willing to release 400 non-combatants - including his wives and children - in return for assurances of financial well-being, a cease-fire, and agreement to face trial for war crimes in Uganda rather than the Hague. Matsanga said continued hostilities were preferable to trial before the International Criminal Court (ICC)

15. (C) Matsanga claimed to be working with UN officials in Kinshasa to receive this group of 400 civilians. On October 22, MONUC's Kampala-based political officer confirmed that Matsanga related this information and said MONUC believes Matsanga is in fact in contact with the LRA leadership. While MONUC officials have no faith in Kony's sincerity and did not plan to act on the information, MONUC interpreted Matsanga's report as a sign of Kony's increasing desperation and the regional offensive's effectiveness. Comment: Matsanga is well known as a self-serving media hound. Matsanga took personal credit for allegedly frustrating efforts by other ex-LRA negotiators to obtain weapons for Kony from Eritrea, Libya and Sudan, said he does not support the LRA and is interested only in peace, and asked PolOff for assistance collecting approximately \$40,000 allegedly owed to

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him by the Ugandan government for the Juba peace talks. End Comment.

An NGO View of Anti-LRA Operations

16. (C) On October 15, the U.S. NGO Enough Project's Uganda-based field researcher, Ledio Cakaj, praised the professionalism of UPDF soldiers operating in Southern Sudan. Cakaj, who had just returned from Southern Sudan, told PolOff that the UPDF's professionalism stood in stark contrast to poorly trained Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) security forces who Cakaj said were frequently drunk and prone to making sexually explicit comments to the European nuns serving as his translators. Cakaj said he heard no accusations of human rights abuses against the UPDF in Sudan, and that local Sudanese populations are eager for the UPDF to remain because the Ugandans are the most competent source of protection in the region.

17. (C) UPDF commanders based in the Southern Sudanese town of Nzara said the offensive against the LRA is going well and that Kony is close to defeat. They told Cakaj that Kony is still in the Central African Republic (CAR) but attempting to cross back into the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Cakaj observed some Ugandan casualties while visiting the base and heard of an LRA ambush against UPDF forces just outside of Nzara in early September. He hitched a ride back to Entebbe on a UPDF helicopter returning with the body of one dead Ugandan soldier.

18. (C) Cakaj speculated that if cornered Kony could attempt a mass suicide in a 'Jonestown-like' scenario with his entourage. He based this on a conversation with the Sudanese wife of one of Kony's bodyguards, who lived in the same compound as Kony's wives prior to the December 2008 regional offensive. She claimed Kony repeatedly said he would not allow himself to be captured and warned his family that, if captured, the UPDF would torture and kill all of them. Cakaj connected this to a separate conversation with northern Ugandan peace negotiator Betty Bigombe who said Kony

aspired to "die like Hitler."

LRA War Crimes

¶9. (C) The Registrar of Uganda's newly-formed War Crimes Division, Lawrence Tweyanze, told Poloff on October 26 that Uganda is preparing to indict Col. Thomas Kwoyello for war crimes. The UPDF captured Col. Kwoyello in the DRC in March ¶2009. He would be the first Ugandan charged domestically with war crimes. The War Crimes Division of the High Court was formed in 2008 as part of the Juba Peace Agreement which stipulated the creation of a national level legal framework to prosecute LRA members within Uganda. Tweyanze said the High Court is waiting for final approval from the Department of Public Prosecutions before moving ahead with war crimes proceedings. Although the War Crimes Division was established to provide a domestic alternative to extraditing LRA leaders to the ICC, Tweyanze said the ICC may not accept the division's decisions and could still pursue separate indictments. Kwoyello already has 12 counts of kidnapping with the intent to murder against him in the Ugandan court system.

¶10. (C) Tweyanze said only Kwoyello and one other LRA prisoner are currently under consideration for war crimes prosecution. The GOU has given amnesty to other captured LRA rebels. Under the Amnesty Act of 2000, Uganda must pardon all those renouncing armed rebellion. Tweyanze said the National Reconciliation Bill, which is pending approval in Parliament, would also shift responsibility for war crimes indictments from the DPP to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. He said there are 15 to 20 LRA members at large that Uganda would likely prosecute if apprehended.

Comment: The Decline and Fall of the LRA

¶11. (C) LTC Arop's capture will further accelerate the LRA's downward spiral as it enables the UPDF to now focus its 10 battalions on Kony and his remaining elements in CAR. Matsanga's reappearance and eagerness to collect his outstanding debts before it is too late may indicate that he, too, believes the LRA is nearing the end of its existence. NGO worker reports from Southern Sudan confirming the

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professionalism of the UPDF and the respect it has engendered amongst local communities are also encouraging, and we fully expect that UPDF forces tracking Kony through CAR will continue to conform to this high standard.
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